

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 5-26 are pending in this application, of which claims 7, 14 and 21 are withdrawn from consideration. Claim 26 has been newly added. Claim 17 has been canceled. Reconsideration of the rejections in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment, which is captioned "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made."

Allowable Claims

Applicant gratefully acknowledges that claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8-13 and 22-24 were allowed and claim 25 was merely objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, but are otherwise allowable. Claim 25 has been amended to be in independent form to overcome the objection.

Rejections under 35 USC §103(a)

Claims 15-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Joo (U.S. Patent No. 6,342,425).

Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 15 has been further amended to recite "(e) forming a metal nitride layer on the rare metal layer after said step (a) and before said step (b), wherein said step (c) is terminated before the rare metal layer is exposed and said step (d) patterns the metal nitride layer and the rare metal layer by using the

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/765,437

patterned insulating mask layer,” deleting the recitation “(f) forming an insulating film over the semiconductor substrate, the insulating film covering the patterned insulating mask layer.”

Therefore, Joo does not teach or suggest, among other things, “(e) forming a metal nitride layer on the rare metal layer after said step (a) and before said step (b), wherein said step (c) is terminated before the rare metal layer is exposed and said step (d) patterns the metal nitride layer and the rare metal layer by using the patterned insulating mask layer,” as recited in amended claim 15.

For at least this reason, claim 15 patentably distinguishes over Joo. Claims 16, 18-20 depending from claim 15, also patentably distinguish over Joo for at least the same reason.

Thus, the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejections should be withdrawn.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claims, as amended, are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

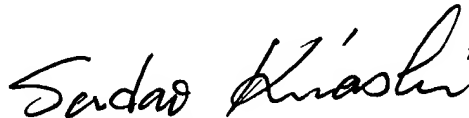
If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/765,437

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

ARMSTRONG, WESTERMAN & HATTORI, LLP



Sadao Kinashi

Attorney for Applicant

Reg. No. 48,075

SK/fs

Atty. Docket No. **001764**
Suite 1000, 1725 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-2930



23850

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosures: Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

H:\HOME\fsakai\amendment\001764-3 rce

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 17 has been canceled.

Claim 26 has been newly added.

Claims 15 and 25 have been amended as follows:

15. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

(a) forming a rare metal layer above a semiconductor substrate formed with semiconductor elements;

(b) forming an insulating mask layer on the rare metal layer;

(c) patterning the insulating mask layer by using a resist pattern;

(d) patterning the rare metal layer by using the patterned insulating mask layer; and

~~(f) forming an insulating film over the semiconductor substrate, the insulating film covering the patterned insulating mask layer~~

(e) forming a metal nitride layer on the rare metal layer after said step (a) and before said step (b), wherein said step (c) is terminated before the rare metal layer is exposed and said step (d) patterns the metal nitride layer and the rare metal layer by using the patterned insulating mask layer.

25. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device ~~according to claim 15,~~
comprising the steps of:

(a) forming a rare metal layer above a semiconductor substrate formed with semiconductor elements;

(b) forming an insulating mask layer on the rare metal layer;

(c) patterning the insulating mask layer by using a resist pattern;

(d) patterning the rare metal layer by using the patterned insulating mask layer; and

(f) forming an insulating film over the semiconductor substrate, the insulating film covering the patterned insulating mask layer.

wherein said insulating mask layer is a TaO layer.